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ABSTRACT

It has been observed that the process of acculturation is a potential source of stress. The population of El Paso-Ciudad Juarez border region of Texas and Mexico can be considered as highly vulnerable to the influence of acculturative stress on family functioning. An empirical study was conducted to investigate the relationship between acculturation processes and family functioning in the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez area. The families of 125 college students from three institutions served as subjects; 92 of the subjects identified themselves as Hispanic American and 33 as Mexican Nationals. Data collected were demographic variables and self-report measures of behavioral and value acculturation, biculturalism, adherence to traditional cultural values of the Mexican family, and family functioning. The results indicated these factors were associated with more favorable evaluations of family functioning: (1) mothers' higher levels of participation in the American culture; (2) male adolescents' higher levels of participation in the Hispanic culture; and (3) female adolescents' greater adherence to traditional cultural values of the Hispanic family. All this suggests that bridging cultural differences in the family through the encouragement of biculturalism is important to minimize the possible detrimental effects of acculturation processes among Hispanic American families with adolescents living in bicultural communities. (ABL)

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THE INFLUENCE OF ACCULTURATION ON FAMILY FUNCTIONING AMONG HISPANIC AMERICANS IN A BICULTURAL COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

Berry and Annis (1974) have observed that the process of adaptation to a new culture (i.e., acculturation) is a potential source of stress. Szapocznik and colleagues have presented a model of acculturation that links family disruption in Cuban American families with adolescents to acculturative stress (Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines, & Aranalde, 1978; Szapocznik, Santisteban, Kurtines, Perez-Vidal, & Hervis, 1984). This model is based on the following tenets: (1) the rate of acculturation is positively related to male sex and young age; (2) cultural gaps emerge between youngsters and parents-youngsters acculturate more rapidly and have greater participation in the Anglo American culture while parents who acculturate more slowly participate more in the Hispanic culture; and (3) cultural gaps in the family intensify differences between parents and youth and thus exacerbate family conflict.

The population of the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border region can be considered as highly vulnerable to the influence of acculturative stress on family functioning. Hispanics are 70% of the population of El Paso and there is high cultural exchange in this border region because of the social, economic, and political interdependence between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Therefore, an empirical study was conducted to investigate the relationship between acculturation processes and family functioning in Hispanic American families with adolescents.

METHODS

Subjects

The families of 125 college students from three institutions (The University of Texas at El Paso, N=77; El Paso Community College, N=37; and La Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, N=11) were the subjects; 92 identified themselves as Hispanic American and 33 as Mexican Nationals. For this study, family units consisted of the adolescent college student, an adolescent brother or sister (if present), and the mother. Adolescents' median age was 19 (range = 11 - 22), 48% were males and 52% females; mothers' median age was 46 (range = 30 - 62).

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Instruments

Data collected were demographic variables (e.g., socioeconomic status) and self-report measures of behavioral and value acculturation (Szapocznik et al., 1978), biculturalism (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980), adherence to traditional cultural values of the Mexican family (Sociocultural Premises [SCPs]; Díaz-Guerrero, 1986),

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and family functioning (Family Assessment Device [FAD]; Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983).

Procedure

The SCPs were back-translated into English and the FAD into Spanish; the other instruments were available in both languages. The students completed the questionnaires in their language of preference, and they collected data from their participating family members and returned those questionnaires to the investigator.

RESULTS

Evidence was found for the emergence of cultural gaps in the families and for the presence of acculturative stress on family functioning.

1. Male sex was positively and weakly correlated with behavioral acculturation in adolescents: partial $r(91) = .18$, $p<.05$ (controlling for age, years living in the U.S., and income). A moderately strong negative association between behavioral acculturation and age was found in the total sample: partial $r(100) = -.67$, $p<.001$ (controlling for sex, years living in the U.S., and income).

2. Adolescents had significantly higher levels of participation in the American culture ($M=3.69$, $SD=.72$) than their mothers ($M=2.88$, $SD=1.1$), F (1, 235) = 51.59, $p<.001$, Omega squared = .18. Adolescents also had significantly lower levels of participation in the Hispanic culture ($M=3.29$, $SD=.82$) than their mothers ($M=3.9$, $SD=.75$), F (1, 235) = 35.78, $p<.001$, Omega squared = .13. (See figure 1).

3. Acculturation indexes were weakly to moderately correlated with different dimensions of family functioning (See tables 1, 2, & 3). In general, mothers' participation in the American culture (Americanism) had a positive influence- and Hispanicism a negative in their evaluations of family functioning (mostly in the behavior control dimension). Among male adolescents, Americanism had a negative influence while Hispanicism a positive on several dimensions of family functioning. Female adolescents' evaluations of family functioning were mostly influenced by cultural values rather than behavioral cultural participation: American values had a negative influence and Hispanic a positive on several dimensions of family functioning.

DISCUSSION

The results provide evidence in favor of the assumption that acculturation processes have the *potential* to exacerbate intergenerational differences in Hispanic American families with adolescents. As evidenced in the results, the following factors were associated with more favorable evaluations of family functioning:

1. Mothers' higher levels of participation in the American culture.

2. Male adolescents' higher levels of participation in the Hispanic culture.

3. Female adolescents' greater adherence to traditional cultural values of the Hispanic family.

All of this suggests that bridging cultural differences in the family through the encouragement of biculturalism is important to minimize the *possible* detrimental effects of acculturation processes among Hispanic American families with adolescents living in bicultural communities. These data suggest that it is imperative that prevention and intervention programs for Hispanic American families are sensitive to the influence of culture and the acculturation process (e.g., Ramírez, 1983; Szapocznik et al., 1984).

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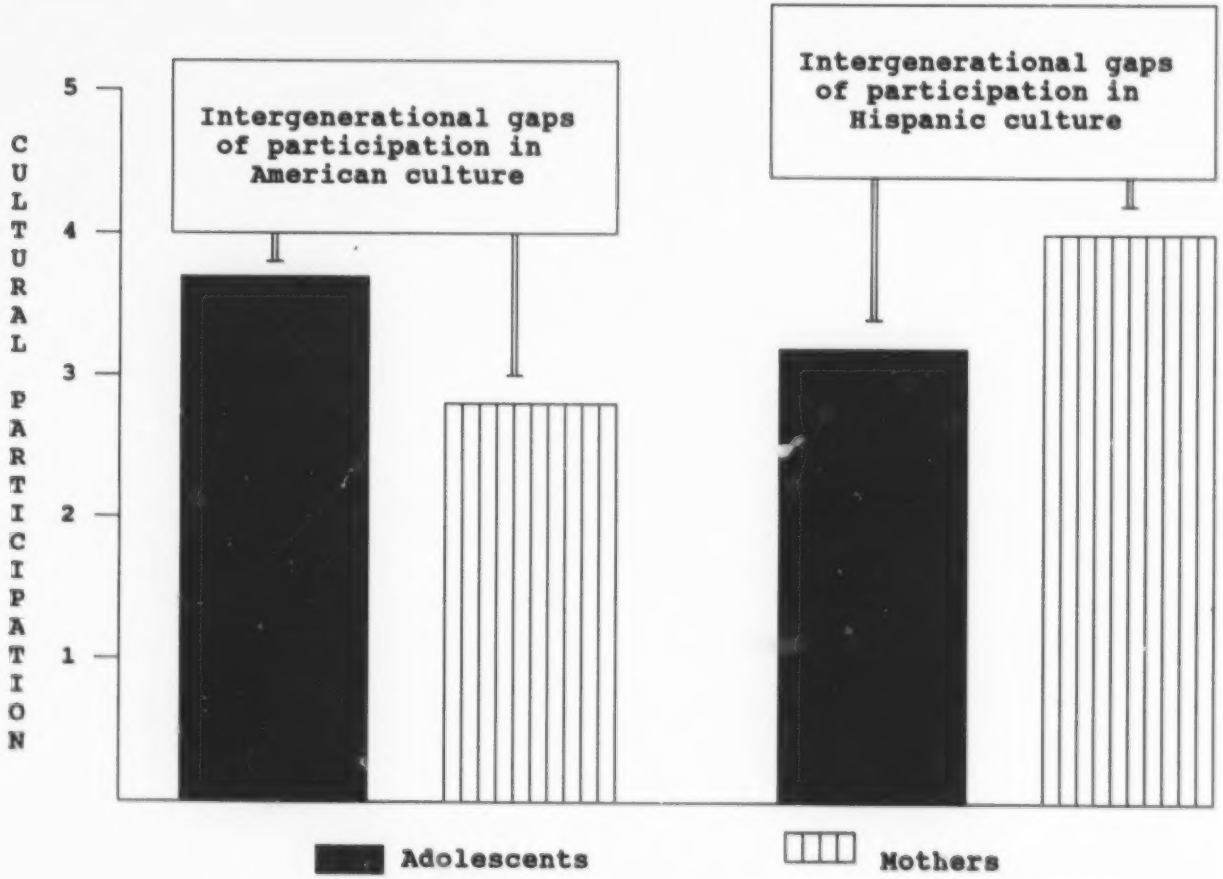

Figure 1. Mean Americanism and Hispanicism scores in adolescents and mothers.

Table 1

Partial correlations of acculturation indices and SCPs with dimensions of family functioning controlling for income and family size in mothers

Mothers (N=75)	Family Funct.	Problem Solving	Communi-cation	Roles	Affect Resp	Affect Invol	Behavior Control
Behavioral Acculturation		-.19*					-.45***
Americanism		-.23*		-.20*			-.39***
Hispanicism							.33**
Biculturalism							-.21*
Cultural Involvement	-.20*						-.22*
Value Acculturation							-.27**
SCPs	.20*			.30**			.30**

NOTE: The FAD assesses family dysfunctioning
* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$
*** $p<.001$

Table 2

Partial correlations of acculturation indices and SCPs with dimensions of family functioning controlling for family size and income in male adolescents

Male (N=59) Adolescents	Family Funct.	Problem Solving	Communi-cation	Roles	Affect Resp	Affect Invol	Behavior Control
Behavioral Acculturation	.38**	.27*	.24*		.40**	.53***	
Americanism	.29*		.22*		.32**	.51***	
Hispanicism	-.41***	-.29*	-.32**		-.40**	-.52***	
Biculturalism						-.27*	
Cultural Involvement	-.22*	-.22*					
Value Acculturation			.34**		.37**		
SCPs							

NOTE: The FAD assesses family dysfunctioning
* p<.05
** p<.01
*** p<.001

Table 3

Partial correlations of acculturation indices and SCPs with dimensions of family functioning controlling for income and family size in female adolescents

Female (N=62) Adolescents	Family Funct.	Problem Solving	Communi-cation	Roles	Affect Resp	Affect Invol	Behavior Control
Behavioral Acculturation						.22*	
Americanism						.22*	-.22*
Hispanicism						-.28*	
Biculturalism		-.25*					-.30**
Cultural Involvement		-.36**					-.40**
Value Acculturation		.25*		.20*	.23*		.28*
SCPs	-.29*	-.42***	-.24*	-.22*	-.23*		-.25*

NOTE: The FAD assesses family dysfunctioning
* p<.05
** p<.01
*** p<.001